13th Annual Community Renaissance Festival Poetry Performance Competition
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Shakespeare Sonnet #15

When I consider every thing that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and checked even by the self-same sky,
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory;
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
Where wasteful Time debateth with decay
To change your day of youth to sullied night,
And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.
Shakespeare Sonnet #18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
Shakespeare Sonnet #33

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;

Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:

Even so my sun one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out, alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath mask’d him from me now.

Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth.
Shakespeare Sonnet #62

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
And all my soul, and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account;
And for myself mine own worth do define,
As I all other in all worths surmount.
But when my glass shows me myself indeed
Beated and chopp'd with tanned antiquity,
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
Self so self-loving were iniquity.
'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.
Shakespeare Sonnet #89

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
   And I will comment upon that offence:
Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt,
   Against thy reasons making no defence.
Thou canst not, love, disgrace me half so ill,
   To set a form upon desired change,
As I'll myself disgrace; knowing thy will,
I will acquaintance strangle, and look strange;
Be absent from thy walks; and in my tongue
Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell,
Lest I, too much profane, should do it wrong,
   And haply of our old acquaintance tell.
For thee, against my self I'll vow debate,
For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate.
Shakespeare Sonnet #109

O! never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify,
   As easy might I from my self depart
As from my soul which in thy breast doth lie:
   That is my home of love: if I have ranged,
   Like him that travels, I return again;
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,
   So that myself bring water for my stain.
Never believe though in my nature reigned,
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
   That it could so preposterously be stained,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;
   For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my rose, in it thou art my all.
Shakespeare Sonnet #116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
   O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
   It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
   Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
   Within his bending sickle's compass come;
   Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
   But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
   If this be error and upon me proved,
   I never writ, nor no man ever loved.
Shakespeare Sonnet #130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red, than her lips red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
    I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
    But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
    I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
    That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
    And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,
    As any she belied with false compare.
Shakespeare Sonnet #145

Those lips that Love's own hand did make,
Breathed forth the sound that said 'I hate',
   To me that languished for her sake:
But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
   Was used in giving gentle doom;
And taught it thus anew to greet;
'I hate' she altered with an end,
   That followed it as gentle day,
Doth follow night, who like a fiend
From heaven to hell is flown away.
'I hate', from hate away she threw,
   And saved my life, saying 'not you'.
O me! what eyes hath Love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight;
Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
That censures falsely what they see aright?
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
What means the world to say it is not so?
If it be not, then love doth well denote
Love's eye is not so true as all men's: no,
How can it? O! how can Love's eye be true,
That is so vexed with watching and with tears?
No marvel then, though I mistake my view;
The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears.
O cunning Love! with tears thou keep'st me blind,
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.
Leave Me, O Love, which reachest but to dust

Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust;
And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
Grow rich in that which never taketh rust;
Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.
Draw in thy beams and humble all thy might
To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;
Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light,
That both doth shine and give us sight to see.
O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide
In this small course which birth draws out to death,
And think how evil becometh him to slide,
Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heav'nly breath.
Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see:
Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me.
Sidney Sonnet #1

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That the dear She might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,
Oft turning others’ leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention’s stay:
Invention, Nature’s child, fled step-dame Study’s blows,
And others’ feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:
“Fool,” said my Muse to me, “look in thy heart and write.”
Song from *Arcadia*: My True Love Hath My Heart

My true-love hath my heart and I have his,
By just exchange one for the other given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss;
There never was a bargain better driven.

His heart in me keeps me and him in one;
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own;
I cherish his because in me it bides.

His heart his wound received from my sight;
My heart was wounded with his wounded heart;
For as from me on him his hurt did light,
So still, methought, in me his hurt did smart:
Both equal hurt, in this change sought our bliss,
My true love hath my heart and I have his.
Astrophil and Stella 106: O absent presence, Stella is not here

O absent presence, Stella is not here;
False flattering hope, that with so fair a face
Bare me in hand, that in this orphan place
Stella, I say my Stella, should appear.

What say’st thou now? Where is that dainty cheer
Thou told’st mine eyes should help their famished case?

But thou art gone, now that self-felt disgrace
Doth make me most to wish thy comfort near.

But here I do store of fair ladies meet,
Who may with charm of conversation sweet
Make in my heavy mould new thoughts to grow:

Sure they prevail as much with me, as he
That bade his friend, but then new maimed, to be
Merry with him, and not think of his woe.
Astrophil and Stella 71: Who will in fairest book of nature know

Who will in fairest book of nature know
How virtue may best lodg'd in beauty be,
Let him but learn of love to read in thee,
Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.

There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
Of reason, from whose light those night-birds fly;
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.

And, not content to be perfection's heir
Thyself, dost strive all minds that way to move,
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair.

So while thy beauty draws thy heart to love,
As fast thy virtue bends that love to good:
But "Ah," Desire still cries, "Give me some food!"
Air and Angels

Twice or thrice had I lov'd thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame
Angels affect us oft, and worshipp'd be;
Still when, to where thou wert, I came,
Some lovely glorious nothing I did see.
But since my soul, whose child love is,
Takes limbs of flesh, and else could nothing do,
More subtle than the parent is
Love must not be, but take a body too;
And therefore what thou wert, and who,
I bid Love ask, and now
That it assume thy body, I allow,
And fix itself in thy lip, eye, and brow.

Whilst thus to ballast love I thought,
And so more steadily to have gone,
With wares which would sink admiration,
I saw I had love's pinnace overfraught;
Ev'ry thy hair for love to work upon
Is much too much, some fitter must be sought;
For, nor in nothing, nor in things
Extreme, and scatt'ring bright, can love inhere;
Then, as an angel, face, and wings
Of air, not pure as it, yet pure, doth wear,
So thy love may be my love's sphere;
Just such disparity
As is 'twixt air and angels' purity,
'Twixt women's love, and men's, will ever be.
A Burnt Ship

Out of a fired ship, which by no way

But drowning could be rescued from the flame,

Some men leap'd forth, and ever as they came

Near the foes' ships, did by their shot decay;

So all were lost, which in the ship were found,

They in the sea being burnt, they in the burnt ship drown'd.
Holy Sonnets: Death be not proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
   Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
   Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
   From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
   And soonest our best men with thee do go,
   Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
   And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
   And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
   And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
   One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.
Holy Sonnets: This is my play’s last scene

This is my play's last scene; here heavens appoint

My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race,

Idly, yet quickly run, hath this last pace,

My span's last inch, my minute's latest point;

And gluttonous death will instantly unjoint

My body and my soul, and I shall sleep a space;

But my'ever-waking part shall see that face

Whose fear already shakes my every joint.

Then, as my soul to'heaven, her first seat, takes flight,

And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell,

So fall my sins, that all may have their right,

To where they'are bred, and would press me, to hell.

Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evil,

For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devil.
Holy Sonnets: I am a little world made cunningly

I am a little world made cunningly
Of elements and an angelic sprite,
But black sin hath betray'd to endless night
My world's both parts, and oh both parts must die.
You which beyond that heaven which was most high
Have found new spheres, and of new lands can write,
Pour new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
Drown my world with my weeping earnestly,
Or wash it, if it must be drown'd no more.
But oh it must be burnt; alas the fire
Of lust and envy have burnt it heretofore,
And made it fouler; let their flames retire,
And burn me O Lord, with a fiery zeal
Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heal.
The face that launch'd a thousand ships

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.

Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.

I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sack'd;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.

O, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!
Accurs’d be he that first invented war

Accurs’d be he that first invented war!
They knew not, ah, they knew not, simple men,
How those were hit by pelting cannon-shot
Stand staggering like a quivering aspen-leaf
Fearing the force of Boreas' boisterous blasts!
In what a lamentable case where I,
If nature had not given me wisdom's lore!
For kings are clouts that every man shoots at,
Our crown the pin that thousands seek to cleave:
Therefore in policy I think it good
To hide it close; a goodly stratagem,
And far from any man that is a fool:
So shall not I be known; or if I be,
They cannot take away my crown from me.
Here will I hide it in this simple hole.
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate.
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,
We wish that one should love, the other win;

And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows; let it suffice
What we behold is censured by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?
Spenser Sonnet #54

Of this worlds theatre in which we stay,
   My love like the spectator ydly sits
Beholding me that all the pageants play,
   Disguysing diversly my troubled wits.
Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits,
   And mask in myrth lyke to a comedy:
Soone after when my joy to sorrow flits,
   I waile and make my woes a tragedy.
Yet she, beholding me with constant eye,
Delights not in my merth nor rues my smart:
But when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry
She laughs and hardens evermore her heart.
What then can move her? if nor merth nor mone,
   She is no woman, but a senceless stone.
Spenser Sonnet #75

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Again I write it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.
Vain man, said she, that doest in vain assay,
A mortal thing so to immortalize,
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eek my name be wiped out likewise.
Not so, (quod I) let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse, your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name.
Where whenas death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.
My Love Is Like To Ice

My love is like to ice, and I to fire:
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not allayed by her heart-frozen cold,
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told,
That fire, which all things melts, should harden ice,
And ice, which is congeal's with senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?
Such is the power of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.
Spenser Sonnet #40

Mark when she smiles with amiable cheare,
And tell me whereto can ye lyken it;
When on each eyelid sweetly doe appeare
An hundred Graces as in shade to sit.
Lykest it seemeth, in my simple wit,
Unto the fayre sunshine in somers day,
That, when a dreadfull storme away is flit,
Thrugh the broad world doth spred his goodly ray
At sight whereof, each bird that sits on spray.
And every beast that to his den was fled,
Comes forth afresh out of their late dismay,
And to the light lift up their drouping hed.
So my storme-beaten hart likewise is cheared
With that sunshine, when cloudy looks are cleared.
Spenser Sonnet #9

Long-while I sought to what I might compare
Those powerful eyes, which lighten my dark spright;
Yet find I naught on earth, to which I dare
Resemble th’ image of their goodly light.
Not to the Sun; for they do shine by night;
Nor to the Moon; for they are changed never;
Nor to the Stars; for they have purer sight;
Nor to the Fire; for they consume not ever;
Nor to the Lightning; for they still perséver;
Nor to the Diamond; for they are more tender;
Nor unto Crystal; for nought may them sever;
Nor unto Glass; such baseness mought offend her.

Then to the Maker self they likest be,
Whose light doth lighten all that here we see.
Spenser Sonnet #50

Long languishing in double malady
Of my harts wound and of my bodies griefe,
There came to me a leach, that would apply
Fit medicines for my bodies best reliefe.
Vayne man, quoth I, that hast but little priefe*
In deep discovery of the mynds disease;
Is not the hart of all the body chiefe,
And rules the members as it selfe doth please?
Then with some cordialls seeke for to appease
The inward languor of my wounded hart,
And then my body shall have shortly ease.
But such sweet cordialls passe physicians art:
Then, my lyfes leach! doe you your skill reveale,
And with one salve both hart and body heale.
Spenser Sonnet #35

My hungry eyes, through greedy covetize
Still to behold the obiect of their paine,
With no contentment can themselves suffize;
But having, pine, and having not, complaine.
For lacking it, they cannot lyfe sustayne;
And having it, they gaze on it the more,
In their amazement lyke Narcissus vaine,
Whose eyes him starv'd: so plenty makes me poore.

Yet are mine eyes so filled with the store
Of that faire sight, that nothing else they brooke,
But lothe the things which they did like before,
And can no more endure on them to looke.
All this worlds glory seemeth vayne to me,
And all their showes but shadowes, saving she.